

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 09989 240910Z

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SUBJ: PRC MEDIA ON THE BATTLE FOR THE PRESIDENCY AND THE FORD
CAMPAIGN

REF: HONG KONG 9862

SUMMARY. A COMMENTARY IN THE LOCAL PRC-OWNED PRESS ON THE
FORD-CARTER BATTLE FOR THE PRESIDENCY LINKS RECENT FORD DECISIONS
(E.G. TO CUT DOWN THE TREE AT PANMUNJOM) AND ALLEGEDLY CURRENT
MANIFESTATIONS OF CONSERVATISM (E.G. HIS PUBLIC REFERENCE TO CHINA)
WITH HIS BATTLE TO GAIN THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION AND DEFEAT THE
"POWERFUL" DEMOCRATIC ADVERSARY IN THE NOVEMBER ELECTION.
END SUMMARY

1. AN AUGUST 23 HSIN WAN PAO COMMENTARY ON THE BATTLE FOR THE
U.S. PRESIDENCY POINTS OUT THAT THE DEATH OF THE TWO AMERICAN
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PAGE 02 HONG K 09989 240910Z

OFFICERS IN KOREA OCCURRED JUST AS PRESIDENT FORD WAS BEING

NOMINATED, AND THAT THE SUBSEQUENT DECISION TO FELL THE TREE AT PANMUNJOM WAS HIS FIRST DECISION IN THE AREA OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AFTER RECEIVING THE REPUBLICAN PARTY NOMINATION. THE PRC-OWNED PAPER ALSO NOTES THAT ON THE DOMESTIC SIDE HIS FIRST DECISION WAS SELECTION OF ROBERT DOLE, A CONSERVATIVE, AS HIS VICE-PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE.

2. ASSERTING THAT THE REAGAN-INFLUENCED REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM HAS THE "ODOR" OF "TWO CHINAS", THE COMMENTARY POINTS OUT THAT FORD'S POST-NOMINATION ADDRESS USES THE TERM "MAINLAND CHINA" INSTEAD OF THE FORMAL NAME OF THE PRC IN AN ATTEMPT TO CURRY FAVOR FROM PARTY CONSERVATIVES. THE HSIN WAN PAO COMMENTARY ALSO NOTES, AS HAD A PREVIOUS LOCAL COMMENTARY, THAT THE ULTIMATE VICTOR IN THE ELECTION IS NOT BOUND BY WHAT IS WRITTEN OR SAID DURING THE CAMPAIGN (REFTEL). HOWEVER, WHILE MAINTAINING THAT CURRENT MANIFESTATIONS OF FORD CONSERVATISM ARE OBVIOUS, IT SPECIFICALLY ATTRIBUTES THIS DEVELOPMENT TO HIS STRUGGLE TO WIN THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION, GARNER THE SUPPORT OF PARTY CONSERVATIVES -- INCLUDING THOSE WHO MIGHT BE INCLINED TO SUPPORT THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE -- AND ULTIMATELY TO DEFEAT CARTER'S BID FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

3. IT DECLARES THAT CARTER IS A "POWERFUL ADVERSARY", AND POINTS OUT THAT WHEREAS AT THE TIME OF CARTER'S NOMINATION, 96 PERCENT OF DEMOCRATS POLLED BELIEVED THAT HE COULD WIN THE ELECTION, AT THE TIME OF FORD'S NOMINATION ONLY SOME 50 PERCENT OF REPUBLICANS POLLED BELIEVED THAT HE COULD DEFEAT CARTER. THE COMMENTARY ALSO IMPLIES THAT THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PANMUNJOM INCIDENT IS IN LARGE PART RELATED TO HIS EFFORTS TO INCREASE HIS SUPPORT WITHIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND INDICATES THAT IT IS NOW UNLIKELY THAT THE KOREAN SITUATION WILL WORSEN.

4. FINALLY, WE NOTE THAT PRC DOMESTIC MEDIA'S FIRST MENTION OF THE RESULTS OF THE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN CONVENTIONS IS A BRIEF NCNA REPORT OF AUGUST 20 WHICH MAINTAINS THAT "BITTER INTRA-PARTY STRUGGLES" PRECEDED THE SELECTION OF EACH PARTY'S NOMINEES. IT PREDICTS A "HEATED" ELECTION CAMPAIGN BETWEEN NOW AND THE NOVEMBER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 HONG K 09989 240910Z

ELECTIONS BUT MAKES NO REFERENCE TO EITHER PARTY'S PLATFORM. CROSS

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